



INDIANS AMONG STUDENTS SEEKING COMPENSATION FROM 36 U.K. UNIVS
Around 500 Indians figure in a larger group of students seeking compensation for not receiving the level of education they paid for during Covid

'COVID CURBS AFFECTED QUALITY OF EDUCATION'
While they paid for in-person teaching and access to university facilities like libraries and studios, their teaching was moved online and facilities were closed for lengthy periods during Covid, Student Group Claim, leading the action said. Fees for online degree courses in the UK are up to 50% less than in-person courses. Universities should have paid that difference, it said

PRE-CLASS ACTION SUIT LETTERS SENT

Pre-class action letters have been sent to 36 universities including Imperial College, LSE and King's College London. Student Group Claim is inviting more students from 2020-21 year to join its action
It comes as a confidential settlement was recently agreed by the University College London with about 6,000 of its students

20,000

INTERNATIONAL APPLICANTS ARE PART OF THE CLASS ACTION SUIT

GLOBAL INVESTMENTS, COLLABS POUR IN AT A.I. IMPACT SUMMIT

Microsoft, Google, Qualcomm line up to plug into India's AI space

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

THE India AI Impact Summit 2026 has seen major stakeholders lining up to announce their plans to invest in and build on India's AI ecosystem. While global majors Qualcomm and Microsoft announced significant investment plans, OpenAI and NVIDIA outlined new partnerships to strengthen the ecosystem and build AI infrastructure. Google also announced the America-India Connect initiative, a subsea cable project aimed at enhancing data connectivity between the US, India and the Southern Hemisphere.

Qualcomm said it would invest \$150 million to support India's rapidly expanding technology and AI startup ecosystem. The announcement coincided with Qualcomm CEO Cristiano Amon's participation in the AI summit, which has now been extended by a day till February 21.

Microsoft plans to invest \$50 billion by the end of the decade to expand AI access across the Global South. Vice-chair and President Brad Smith and Vice-president and Chief Responsible AI Officer Natasha Crampton said urgent action is needed to prevent a widening AI divide from exacerbating global economic disparities.

Google CEO Sundar Pichai announced the America-India Connect initiative, a subsea ca-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Google CEO Sundar Pichai in New Delhi | P1

ble project to improve data connectivity between the US, India, and the broader Southern Hemisphere. The announcement followed his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "We believe India is going to have an extraordinary trajectory with AI, and we want to be a partner. To help, we have launched new America-India Connect subsea cable routes, building on our \$15 billion investment in India's infrastructure, including a full-stack AI Hub in Vizag," Pichai said.

In addition, Google committed \$30 million each for the Government Innovation Impact Challenge, aimed at supporting AI-powered government-to-cit-

izen solutions, and the Science Impact Challenge, a global fund for researchers advancing scientific discovery using AI.

OpenAI, the maker of ChatGPT, announced a major initiative in India to integrate AI across higher education. The programme seeks to help students, faculty, and staff use AI tools responsibly to enhance learning, research, and creativity across disciplines including management, engineering, healthcare and creative arts.

AI chip maker NVIDIA announced partnerships with Larsen & Toubro, Yotta Infrastructure, and E2E Networks to establish advanced 'AI factories' in India.



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Galgotias Univ chunked after robot dog byte

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

THE government has asked Galgotias University, which showcased a Chinese-made robotic dog as its own creation at the India AI Impact Summit, to vacate its booth from the ongoing exhibition.

MeitY secretary S Krishnan said the government expects companies to follow a defined code of conduct and will not encourage plagiarism or misinformation. "We don't want any controversy around the exhibits being presented," he said.

When asked whether the products being showcased were verified or certified, he said these were not meant for sale. "Certification happens when something is meant for public distribution... If we start certifying everything that is exhibited, it could end up stifling innovation and creative work."

The controversy began after a professor from the university claimed in an interview that the AI-powered Chinese robo-

dog was developed by the university's Centre of Excellence. Following backlash over the false claim, the university issued an apology saying its representative manning the pavilion was "ill-informed".

Further Oppn slide expected in RS biennial polls

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

RIDING high on its strong showings in the Maharashtra and Bihar elections, the NDA appears set to make significant gains by winning at least half of the 37 Rajya Sabha seats going to biennial polls on March 16. The INDIA bloc may have to settle for 10, down from 19 seats.

Based on its legislative strength, the NDA is expected to win 15-18, while nine of its MPs are retiring next month.

The seats will fall vacant on April 2 and 9 following the retirement of several members, including Rajya Sabha deputy chairman Harivansh (JD(U), NCP-SP's Sharad Pawar, former Lok Sabha deputy speaker M Thambidurai (AIADMK), DMK's Tiruchi Siva, Congress' Abhishek Manu Singhvi and Union ministers Ram Nath Thakur (JD(U) and Ramdas Athavale (RPI-A).

The vacancies are spread across Maharashtra (7), Odisha (4), Telangana (2), Tamil Nadu (6), Chhattisgarh (2

seats), West Bengal (5), Assam (3), Haryana (2), Himachal Pradesh (1) and Bihar (5). In Maharashtra, the ruling BJP-led alliance is likely to win six seats while the opposition MVA may get one if they put up a united fight. The Congress, the Shiv Sena (UBT) and the NCP-SP are likely to lose one seat each.

In Tamil Nadu, the ruling DMK is likely to retain four of the six seats, while the AIADMK is expected to secure one. The remaining seat could see a keen contest. It is a matter of speculation if DMK will agree to the Congress demand for one seat amid strained ties.

In Bengal, the ruling TMC is expected to win four seats, and the BJP one. The CPI(M) is expected to lose its sole MP from the state.

Five seats will be up for grabs in Bihar, with RJD and JD(U) holding two each and RLM one. The BJP is expected to claim two seats and the RJD is set to lose both its seats. Notifications for the polls will be issued on February 26.



No addition

The Congress is likely to win four seats — one each in Telangana, Himachal, Chhattisgarh and Haryana — but will not have any accretion as four of its MPs are retiring

2014 ORDINANCE

Formal Maha order nullifies 5% Muslim reservation

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @ Mumbai

THE Maharashtra government has formally scrapped the 5% reservation for Muslims in government and semi-government jobs and education.

According to a government resolution (GR) issued by the state social justice department on Tuesday night, a 5% reservation was granted to socially and educationally backward Muslim groups under the Special Backward Category in 2014 through an ordinance. However, this ordinance was not converted into a law by passing it through both Houses of the state legislature, and therefore, it has lapsed automatically.

The government has cancelled the earlier decisions and circulars from 2014 and stopped issuing caste and non-creamy layer certificates to Muslims in the Special Backward Category, the GR stated.

The ordinance was issued by the Congress-led government of Prithviraj Chavan ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha and assembly elections, along with a 16% reservation to the Maratha community. The BJP came to power that year and the ordinance on Muslim reservation was not converted into law.

The Congress on Wednesday accused the Devendra Fadnavis government of being against the welfare of minorities.

Mumbai Congress president Varsha Gaikwad termed the decision as "harmful to democracy" and said that it would push the Muslim community away from the mainstream.

Former state Congress working committee member Naseem Khan said while the Congress-NCP government issued the ordinance in 2014, "the subsequent Devendra Fadnavis government did not take the process forward, and even after the Bombay High Court granted interim relief for 5 per cent educational reservation, its implementation was not ensured".

TARIQUE SAYS HIS GOVT WILL PROTECT ALL FAITHS

Announcing a 180-day action plan during his first cabinet meeting, Bangladesh's newly-elected Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on Wednesday vowed to turn the country into a safe land for people of all faiths | P14

STUDYING ABROAD

Saketh's death brings focus on mental distress

RASHMI PATIL @ Bengaluru

THE death of Saketh Sreenivasiah, a 22-year-old youth from Bengaluru and a graduate of IIT Madras, at Berkeley Hills in California has shaken the student community and parents who have sent their children abroad for higher studies. Their concerns are around emotional struggles, bank loans, academic pressure and jobs.

A 22-year-old student, who went to the University of Tartu in Estonia under a student-exchange programme to pursue a master's in European studies and international relations, told TNIE under condition of anonymity, "I went there with a lot of excitement but experienced cultural shock and racism as there are not many Indians in Estonia. This added anxiety and stress. On top of that, I was homesick and had no friends at all. I couldn't complete my fourth semester there."

He added, "In the third semester, I got a scholarship of 800 Euros per month, but the expenses were always higher. I had to opt for a part-time job. But getting that too is not easy as one has to have a Temporary Resident Permit, which I could not get for various reasons. It is difficult to survive in other countries when there is no income. Fortunately, when I approached my university back in Karnataka to complete my fourth semester, they agreed and I flew back."

Another student, who went for a research programme in the department of Aerosol Science and Engineering at Washington University in St Louis in the USA, said, "Research labs in foreign universities are totally different from those in India."

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City to face garbage crisis, villagers block waste trucks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

BENGALURU will face a major garbage crisis as villagers from Bellahalli, which is a landfill site, have stopped 250 garbage compactors, demanding that the promised development projects be taken up in their area.

Hemanth Kumar, a resident of Kogilu Cross in the Byatarayanapura Assembly constituency, said that garbage is being dumped near their village for the last 12 years, but no development has taken place. "A huge quarry pit that spreads across Bellahalli, Kannur and Mitganahalli is being used to dump garbage. Villagers here have been made sacrificial lambs to keep Bengaluru garbage-free," he said.

The villagers said an agreement to dump waste here was done when the city was under BBMP, but even after the Greater Bengaluru Authority was formed, there have been no mo-

torable roads, clean drinking water or development of lakes.

"Groundwater and air are heavily polluted in these villages. The villagers had agreed to allow 75 loads of waste daily, but now over 200 truckloads come here. Frustrated with the pollution and lack of development, we have stopped the trucks. There has been no communication from either the GBA or Bengaluru Solid Waste Management officials so far," said Kumar.

The dumpsite spreads across Byatarayanapura and Mahadevapura Assembly constituencies.

A Narayanswamy, who is Mitganahalli Congress block president and a resident of Kannur, said borewell water in the area is badly polluted. Kannur, Gubbi and partly Bidarahalli, which fall under the Mahadevapura Assembly constituency, have been impacted. The protest will be intensified in the coming days. P2



TWINS BAG SAME JEE MAIN SCORE

Believe it or not, identical twins Mahroof Ahmed Khan and Masroor Ahmed Khan scored an identical 285 in their JEE Main exam as well, hitting the 99.998th percentile. Hailing from Bhubaneswar, both appeared for the exam in the same shift at the same centre. Born on May 7, 2008, they studied together throughout, from school to coaching classes in Kota. Their mother, Dr Zeenat Begum, a gynaecologist, said: "We shifted to Kota in 2023 after both qualified for the Science Olympiad. They later decided to pursue JEE coaching."

EXPRESS READ

Former ISRO employee strangles wife to death in Bommanahalli apartment

Bengaluru: A 72-year-old former employee of the Indian Space Research Organisation allegedly strangled his wife to death at their apartment in Bommanahalli on Wednesday morning. Police have arrested the accused. He allegedly intended to take his own life after killing his wife | P3

Bandipur, Nagarhole safaris to open in two days with curbs

Bengaluru: After nearly a 100-day gap, Bandipur and Nagarhole Tiger Reserves will restart wildlife safaris with restrictions, Forest Minister Eshwar B Khandre said. The safaris will open in another two days. Under the first trial, a maximum of 50 safari vehicles will be permitted per day | P5

RANJI TROPHY

J&K's miracle song: Despite conceding lead, team enters historic final

FIROZ MIRZA @ Chennai

UNTIL the middle of third day, the skies were still gloomy. Home team Bengal had taken the lead, Jammu and Kashmir were tottering on the brink. Only a miracle could have saved them. And it came in the form of Auqib Nabi and Sunil Kumar who took four wickets each to skittle Bengal out for just 99. A target of 126 was achievable. On Wednesday they scripted history. Their journey, though fairytale-ish, has had its share of struggles and trepidation.

J&K head coach Ajay Sharma still remembers the day

when conceding a first innings lead just by a solitary run deprived them a place in the Ranji Trophy semifinal last season. The last pair of Kerala added 81 runs much to the dismay of the J&K team taking their score to 281 — one run more than J&K's first innings total of 280. That was J&K's third entry into the last-eight stage in 66 years but it ended in a big heartbreak. And he hoped nothing like that happened this time.

J&K came back stronger this season and not only went past the quarterfinals but also made

it to their maiden final beating Bengal by six wickets in Kalyani on Wednesday. "That pain was gone when we defeated Madhya Pradesh in Indore to make it to our first semifinal," Sharma told this daily.

For a side that started participating in the premier domestic competition in 1959-60 and waited 23 years for their first win, it's a historic moment. Considered underdogs for decades, J&K made cricket connoisseurs sit up and take notice of them when they entered their maiden quarterfi-

nals in 2013-14. Mismanagement and allegations of financial irregularities led to formation of a three-member sub-committee that comprised Mithun Manhas till he was elected as the BCCI president.

It turned out to be a blessing in disguise as J&K not only got professional coaches and support staff but also saw talent hunt programmes conducted regularly. Left-arm pacer Sunil Kumar was its product. The panel revamped JKCA hostel ground, equipping it with multiple practice wickets, including red soil. Positive changes ushered in positive results. P17



Jammu and Kashmir team celebrates after beating Bengal to enter Ranji Trophy final for the first time on Wednesday. They will play Karnataka from February 24-28 | P11